ScienceDirect

Global Environmental Change

Volume 22, Issue 2, May 2012, Pages 323-328

Editorial

Special Issue Introduction: Adding insult to injury: Climate change and the inequities of climate intervention

Elizabeth Marino, Jesse Ribot

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2012.03.001

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Abstract

Climate change will injure vulnerable communities. In response, coordinated global action has emerged to mitigate climate change, to gauge and map climate-related risks, and to plan for adaptation, which in turn has opened new avenues of funding, power, knowledge and opportunity. The identification of climate risks, analysis and diffusion of 'impact' scenarios, incorporation of carbon into economic regimes, and interventions to enhance adaptive capacity will necessarily be experienced differently by different groups. As climate-related crises produce winners and losers, so may discourses and plans made to avert such crises. In the process both the bio-physical events and the social responses shape and reshape social stratification and the distribution of risk. They produce new inequalities and needs for new kinds of responses to guard against injustice. From the emergence of desalination water projects and contested water access, to relocation planning in the Arctic and the South Pacific due to sea-level rise, to increasingly centralized forest management; mitigation and adaptation responses and interventions create their own critical outcomes. This essay and the articles in this special issue examine some new opportunities and risks associated with climate-change discourses and interventions. This special issue shows that vulnerable communities may be at risk of material injury following climate change or climate change intervention; and, be further insulted and injured by lack of representation and recognition, and by

misrecognition as simplified, stereotyped victims in local, national and international climate conversations. Using a mixture of theoretical insight and case study research, this collection of articles explores the injuries of climate change as it applies to both direct physical stress scenarios and exposure to adaptation and mitigation policies and planning, as well as the discursive insults of being discounted, stereotyped, or ignored.

Section snippets

Stratification in the context of climate action and climate discourse

Social stratification, the division of societies into different groups with different resources, interests and options, is a constant process. Societies are socially and geographically differentiated by class, castes, gender, profession, race, ethnicity, age, and ability. These inequalities may be redressed, but the processes of stratification continue. Hence, equity is not an outcome achieved once and for all, but must be an ongoing process. These differences and the processes that create them …

Contributions in this special issue

The seven articles in this special issue focus on atmospheric carbon reduction (via Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation – REDD) in Tanzania (Beymer-Farris and Bassett); responses to water shortages in Bolivia (McDowell), Mexico (McEvoy and Wilder), and Peru (Lynch); flooding risk in Alaska (Marino) and Tuvalu (Farbotko and Lazrus); and a theory-driven view of the urban inscription of climate related vulnerability in Latin America (Rebotier). While some of these cases …

Conclusions and recommendations

Interventions and discourses surrounding climate change are producing additional stressors on vulnerable communities. These are the insults and injuries of intervention. A technological vision in Mexico leads to a precarious high-tech solution to a water management problem (McEvoy and Wilder); The labeling of vulnerable spaces in urban Latin America deepens the vulnerability of identified populations, and analytics of risk that fail to incorporate subjectivities depoliticize risk and in the …

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Arun Agrawal, Maria Carmen Lemos and Ben Orlove for their constructive comments on the first draft of this introductory editorial. The authors would like to thank the University of Illinois Social Dimensions of Environmental Policy (SDEP) Initiative for sponsoring ICARUS I, and Arun Agrawal and Maria Carmen Lemos at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor's

International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI) for hosting the write-shop from which this special issue emerged. We …

Special issue articles Recommended articles

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Global Environmental Change (2011)

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